

Inhalant Abuse Prevention:

Key Messages for Adults

1. More than 1,000 everyday products, including cleaning, office, and art supplies, solvents, gases, and shop chemicals have the potential to be abused as inhalants.
2. Inhalants are actually poisons, pollutants, toxins, and fire hazards.¹ They are made of crude oil and were never meant to be inhaled.²
3. These products are safe when used as directed, but when vapors are concentrated and breathed in, they can become dangerous and deadly.
4. There is no safe level of inhalant use. 39% of deaths are the result of first time use.³ Therefore, no use should be tolerated and any use should be followed up by a professional alcohol and drug assessment and education about the dangers of inhalant abuse.
5. Inhalants can be addictive, both psychologically and physically. There are roughly as many inhalant addicts as heroin addicts in this country.⁴
6. Inhalants can cause permanent damage to the nervous system, lungs, liver, kidneys, and brain.
7. More children are using inhalants than adults think – and at earlier ages. Nationally, nearly one out of four 8th graders has intentionally inhaled to get high.⁵ Recent surveys indicate that sixth grade use has increased to the level of use by 8th graders (that is, one of four 6th graders has used an inhalant).⁶
8. Because of all these reasons, inhalant abuse should be on your RADAR. Be alert for the signs of inhalant abuse: Suspicious use of products, chemical odors, rash around the mouth and nose, weight loss, paraphernalia (plastic bags, empty containers, and smelly rags).

¹ E.g., gasoline, butane, propane; any product dispensed in an aerosol can such as air freshener, computer air duster, WD40; solvent-based products such as nail polish and remover, white-out, glues, markers, paints

² Mark Groves, “Andy, the Anteater Curriculum”

³ Source: John Ramsey, St. Georges Hospital, United Kingdom data, 2001 <http://www.vsareport.org/>

⁴ Source: National Household Survey, 2002. <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu:8080/SAMHDA-SERIES/00064.xml>

⁵ Source: Monitoring the Future Survey, 2003 available at www.monitoringthefuture.org

⁶ Partnership for a Drug Free America, Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, “New Findings on Inhalants: Younger Adolescents the Most Vulnerable.” March 18, 2004. Report available at www.drugfreeamerica.org

Last Revised December 2004

MAINE INHALANT ABUSE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

A Project of the New England Institute of Addiction Studies / Funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

For more information about inhalants please contact

Maine Office of Substance Abuse Information and Resource Center

Phone: 1-800-499-0027 TTY – 1-800-215-7604

Email: osa.ircosa@maine.gov Web Address: <http://maineosa.org/irc>